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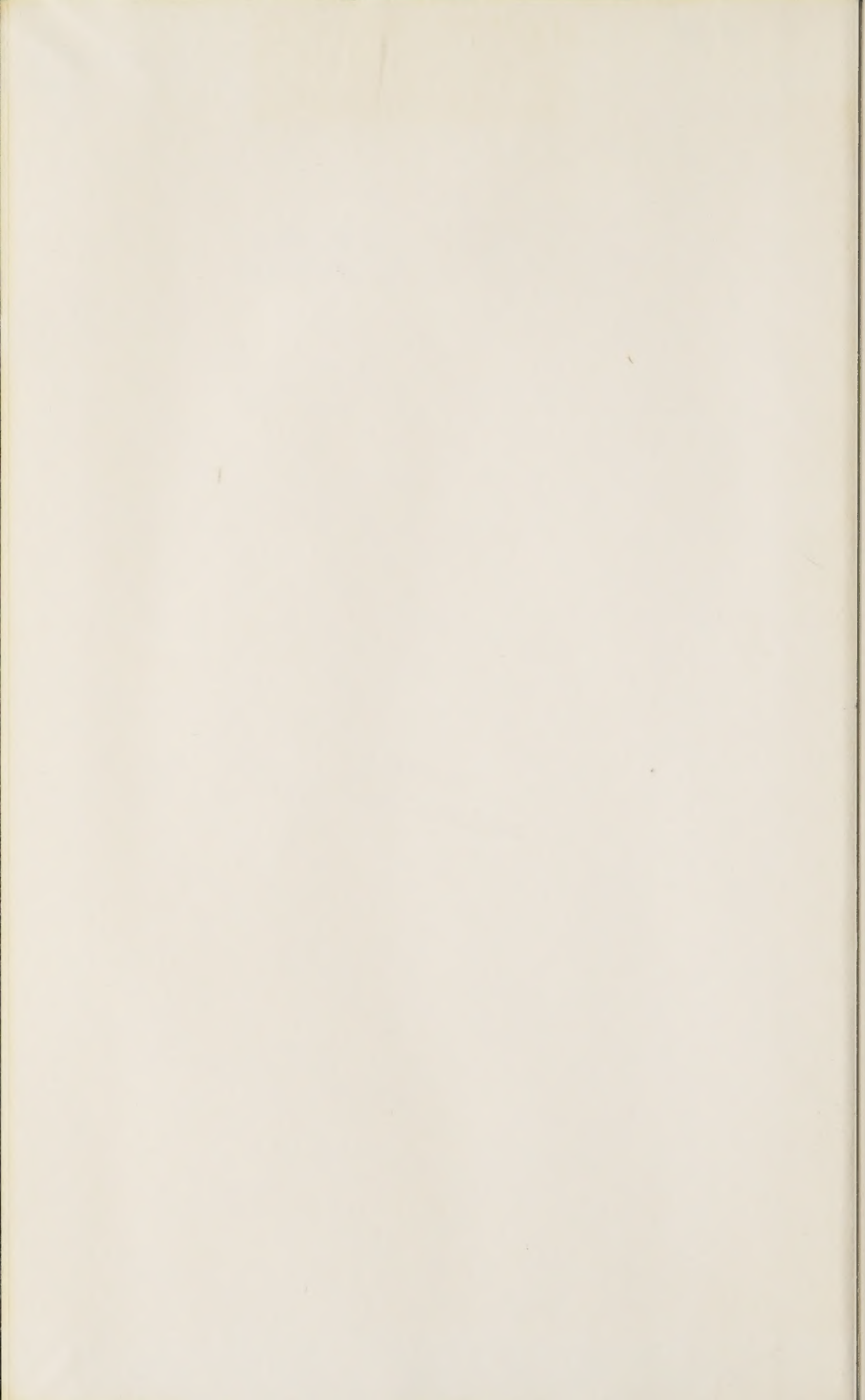
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The Blossburg,
New Mexico Story

by

F. Stanley^{F.} *Crocchiola*

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March, 1962

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F. Stanley

Box 205, Pantex, Texas

The Blossburg, New Mexico Story

By F. Stanley

THE FIGHT OF TWO major railroads for the right of way over Raton Pass was as dramatic as it was fierce. It engendered so many hatreds that even now after several generations families are not on speaking terms. The Hatfields and McCoys had nothing on the Santa Fe men vs. the Rio Grande workers. Small wonder that the movie and TV producers steer clear of the incident. More intimately involved was the Maxwell Land Grant whose coal fields were devoutly desired by whichever railroad puffed up and over the Pass. Everywhere there was confusion. Squatters refused to vacate, and found a champion in O. P. McMains. Others, eying the fortune to be made in coal, banded together into a corporation for either buying or leasing the coal area from the Maxwell Land Grant people. 1879 was an eventful year for the railroad, the Grant company, New Mexico, and the coal men. The original intention was to make Otero the main town as the first stop on this side of Colorado but stops had to be made at Willow creek for the coal coming from Dillon canyon. A town developed at the creek in spite of Otero and was named Raton. Otero soon became a ghost town. Another town developed in the canyon and was called Dillon Canyon for a short time before it became known as Blossburg, really the name of the coal field.

The easiest way to find the old ghost town of Blossburg is to start from the beautiful courthouse of Colfax county in Raton, keep going west past the old cemetery, on to the ghost town of Gardiner, northwest several miles to Blossburg. It is not the last ghost town in the area. Bril-

liant is a few miles to the northwest. The scenery, peace, solitude, exuberance of the high altitude will make you want to stay and stay. Except, of course, in mid-winter, when you meet the second cousin of the North Pole. Not every year, but when it does decide to be real cold it makes up for the mild winters.

Fifteen thousand years before Columbus found someone willing to give him ships for a short route to India, Folsom Man explored the Blossburg area. More recently came the Utes who made it their hunting ground. The Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Kiowas, a few Pawnees, Comanches often camped here on the way to the Taos Fairs during the heyday of the Spaniards. When the New Mexicans again changed flags for the Eagle of Mexico, the Jicarillas hunted here. In territorial days Maxwell, who acquired the original grant to Beaubien and Miranda, sent sheep herders and some cattle to the valley for the lush grasses. Kit Carson and other Mountain men did a little trapping but there was so little fur to warrant their efforts that they soon abandoned the area. For a time Keithley, Maxwell and Carson thought of settling here instead of Rayado. Lack of water deterred them. Dick Wooten (the way he signed his name in the old Don Diego registers at Cimarron although many insist on Wooton) actually had in mind his toll road from this point but eventually went to the Colorado side of the Pass possibly for the same reason Carson, Owens and the others refused to settle there. The ill-fated Villasur Expedition crossed the spot early in the Eighteenth Century. Soldiers from Fort Union selected the spot as camp when building the Raton Pass road. Many freighters took their wagon trains over this site on the way to Taos and Mora. The Long Expedition was aware of coal here as early as 1820. The newly formed Rocky Mountain Coal & Railroad Company closed a deal with the Maxwell Land Grant Company for one hundred thousand acres for extensive coal mining. It actually began as the Raton Coal & Coke Company, organized on December 15, 1880, the Santa Fe naming one half of the directors; the Maxwell Land Grant Company naming the other half.

How Frank Sherwin ruined this company is not our concern. The first lease called for 1,000 acres, then ten. Of this later, 5,875 acres were in Dillon Canyon. Unpleasant-
ries began from the day the Santa Fe found out that the coal company was taking all its hired hands for work in Dillon Canyon, the success attributed to a boost in salary. Incidentally, Blossburg was named for one of the officials of the coal company.

The early miners were a cosmopolitan group and remained so for the life span of the town. Two men, soon to be involved in tragedy in Raton, were quick to seize the opportunity for a hack line between the coal camp and Raton: "Moulton and Eggleston have arranged to run a daily stage line between Raton and Blossburg. For the present a hack will be run, but in the spring they intend putting in one or two stages with good stock. The hack will leave the post office for Blossburg every morning, on the arrival of the express train from the East, reach Raton at 7:30 P. M., in season for passengers to take the East-bound express. This will be of great convenience to the miners and to those who visit the collieries in Dillon canyon. The fare will be fifty cents each way, or seventy-five cents for the round trip, but in the spring it will be reduced to twenty-five cents each way."

"There are now (December 22, 1881) seventy-five drift cars in the Blossburg and Savage collieries. Fifty more are on the road. A pair of large railroad scales for use at Blossburg have been ordered and will be put in use as soon as they arrive. When they are in position, the coal will be weighed on the cars at the mine. Postmaster Griffin at Blossburg was ordered by the post office department at Washington to secure a carrier to transport the mail, between that office and Raton. The compensation was so small that he could not secure a competent man, but Manager Savage came to the rescue and provided a carrier so that Blossburg now has a daily mail. The amount paid by the miners, laborers, carpenters and all the other employees of the company for board in November was \$2,560.62 divided among eleven boarding houses. This does not include

the private board bill of the officers."

Only a week before the editor of the Raton paper noted: "Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Griffin have the pleasure to receive the mail for the Canyon now. The establishment of a post office up there will be a very great convenience." A week later he wrote: "It is an amusing thing to see the Blossburg mail coach. The post office at Blossburg has only been established and as yet only a very lean burro can be afforded to carry the mail. The pouch looks as slack as the burro and the burro looks worse than the devil."

Religion was a factor from the very beginning and Rev. J. B. Callan came in from Raton to preach to the Protestants. The Fothingill home was used as a church. The Catholics were attended by the padre from Springer, about forty-two miles south of Raton. When Raton had its own church the priest came from that town. Before Blossburg got a newspaper of its own the Raton editor got in a few more licks: "Blossburg would be happier with less whiskey, less gambling, and fewer bulldogs. Blossburg has increased its female population by fifteen. Several are of marriageable age. The bachelors there are in high glee. The Blossburg Dancing Club had a social last Saturday night at the boarding house of Messrs Owen & Hotchkinson. Sol Reese is about to own a boarding house and grocery store at Blossburg. Sol is one of the solid men of Dillon, and we wish him luck. C. J. Fry, general clerk and superintendent of the Raton Coal & Coking Company's mill, is about to move into one of the new houses opposite Mr. Griffin's store. Until now a marriage in Blossburg was impossible for lack of material. The women were all married, benedicts wouldn't die and divorces unknown. On Sunday last, Ike Price, mining boss, has returned from his trip to Pennsylvania. He looks well, and besides his handsome wife and the young Prices he brought about fifty other Pennsylvanians with him — miners, mechanics, women and children. Towards the close of last week Blossburg was thrown into a state of excitement by an order giving the 'bounce' to all carpenters employed on the Raton Coal & Coking Company houses. Many of the men have returned

to work under the new boss, Sol Reese, of Pennsylvania. William Urzukurak has charge of all the carpenter work covering company business, coal chutes, etc."

"Blossburg is to have a paper to be called the BLOSSBURG PIONEER. The first number is to be issued on Saturday, January 21st, or certainly one week later (it appeared January 21st). H. B. Wise will be the editor. While Editor Wise advertised Nicholson's saloon, he also regreted that Blossburg was still without a school. Rev. Callan organized a Sunday School and J. W. Morrison was elected superintendent. His assistant was Joseph Boleman. Mary Fothingill was named secretary; Isaac Price was treasurer. In October, 1881, when the Raton Coal & Coke Company began large scale operations at Blossburg, it paid out \$12,-818 for development work and mining; payroll was \$6,395. November development was \$14,411; payroll \$14,978; December development amounted to \$23,282, payroll \$18,515; January (1882) development costs amounted to \$20,956; payroll \$14,932. Number of men working in the mines in January: 250.

One day in early March of 1882, George Newton walked into Parker Fault's saloon. At the bar was Thomas Thompson. Near him was a dinner pail which Newton thought was the one stolen from him some days before. A dispute followed and Johnson left in a huff. Still angry when Newton left the saloon, Johnson waylaid him and wounded him seriously. Caleb George and some other miners jumped Johnson and decided to bring him to Raton before Justice Moulton. Johnson decided he did not want to go to Raton and drew on George who managed to duck the bullet, pulled his own gun and didn't miss. Justice Moulton ruled it "justifiable homicide." Jack Jenkins, who soon afterwards became Justice of the Peace at Blossburg, had as his favorite fine a keg of beer, which everyone present, including the prisoner, was invited to dispatch. At times when arrests were numerous and the stock of beer began to accumulate, the fine would be five dollars worth of crackers and cheese and there would be a feast with beer on the side or beer with a feast on the side.. Everybody

free to do so attended court during these days, the reason being quite obvious. The position of Justice of the Peace at Blossburg was not an enviable one. One time three miners killed Jake Wyruch. The four had been drinking heavily and all of Blossburg considered it a drunken brawl rather than a pre-meditated murder. When the Justice fined the men to the tune of \$5,000 each the miners formed a lynch mob, picked up a rope and headed for his residence. The Justice resigned his job, left town as the mob released the three prisoners. Blossburg had a nice cornet band, a gambling spirit for foot races and horse races. "The foot race at Blossburg was between Jacob Niles and Dick Bentley for one hundred dollars a side. The race was for fifty yards. About \$1,000 changed hands during the race and Bentley won by a foot although Niles was the favorite. Another race was arranged to take place at the next miner's pay day about April 10th, between Frank Jennings of Raton and Shannon of Blossburg for fifty yards and two hundred dollars to the side. Scheduled time is April 10th at 2 p.m." (March 16, 1884) Shannon failed to put in appearance and Reese, who promoted the race, paid fifty dollars rather than forfeit. He lost this also. About this time the French Saloon collapsed whether from the crowds attending the races or for defect in workmanship has not been explained. It was rebuilt and ready for customers by the first week in June. Mace Bowman, a man who proved he could outdraw Clay Allison and other six-shooter marksmen, was deputy for Blossburg although he maintained his residence in Raton. He died at the Trinidad hospital of T. B. The RATON COMET for June 9, 1883, had a write-up on him.

"The miners at Blossburg have been busy the past two weeks perfect arrangements for holding a grand celebration and basket picnic in Blossburg grove Independence Day. The various committees appointed to attend to it have spared no pains in making everything ready for a grand good time that day, and we feel safe in assuring all who attend lots of good sport and good fun. The exercises will consist of a basket dinner, horse races, wheelbarrow

races, sack races, etc., and all will wind up with a grand ball in the evening. Good refreshments can be obtained on the ground, consisting of lemonade, soda water, ice cream, cake, sandwiches, good cigars and beer. A large platform has been erected, good music secured and a good time assured. Half of your life gone if you don't celebrate at Blossburg."

After the Fourth the editor had this to say: "The miners had a good time, a dandy good time, as well as all other citizens who went to Blossburg canyon for the big celebration. Although the celebration was gotten up for and by miners, a general invitation was extended to everybody, which was generally accepted, for the people from nearly every part of the country were there. Mr. Crumock's bay horse took first place in the horse race; W. W. Jones took second place. Dick Davis and Levi Morris were the only contestants in the foot race, won by Davis. Dancing commenced late in the afternoon and continued until morning."

Meetings were held at Blossburg for various reasons. The more violent were those conducted by O. P. McMains and his night riders. McMains, square-jawed, determined, beard floating in the wind, rode in front of his little army to punish any Granter that dared displace a squatter, rancher, miner, stockman dispossessed because he violated the rights of the Maxwell Land Grant Company. It has been said that McMains at times had as many as two hundred men at his command. A few pictures of the Agitator and his riders have been taken but they are hard to come by. Possessors are reluctant to even show them, much less part with them. Harry Smith and a number of miners received anonymous letters telling them that they had better quit the mines if they knew what was good for them. When a goodly number discovered they were recipients of the same threats, they called a meeting. It was decided that some detective work was to be done by a committee to discover the author or authors of the letters. The miners promised them a neck-tie party. It was embarrassing to learn that they came from the pen of none other than

the mine boss, Ed Savage. A band was organized: "The Blossburg Band gave a Grand Ball in Davis Hall in Blossburg. Music for the entertainment was furnished by the Blossburg orchestra and the Raton orchestra. Money raised in this affair is to be used to defray the expenses in having a band at Blossburg." (Jan. 22, 1886). Shortly afterwards the mines closed for a time but re-opened on April 4, 1886. When the mine engine was run off the track the men were again idle.

Blossburg, called by the prompters of the coal industry, the Pittsburg of the West, was not without its tragedies. "The river commenced to rise yesterday (April 20, 1886) and at sundown it was higher than it was ever known, and at 10 P. M. it was a raging torrent, sweeping away bridges, fences, outhouses, chickens, turkeys, hogs, and all that came in its way. The lower part of the town is completely surrounded by water. The saddest feature of the flood is the loss of the infant child of Mrs. John Elmgren. Mrs. Elmgren was carrying the child, and with the assistance of two men, was attempting to cross the river. The current of the stream was so swift that all three were thrown from their feet, and the child was torn from the arms of its mother. In the darkness it could not be seen, and the mother, frantic with grief at the loss of her child, was only constrained from again rushing into the current of the stream by the united efforts of the two men who were with her. The damage to property in this place will be great, and the loss will amount to hundreds of dollars."

Even during those early years the future of the town seemed uncertain. "There is now great speculation as to the future of Blossburg. Some predict entire failure, others partial failure; while the most sober minded, deep thinking men can plainly see that the shortness of work that exists at present is simply a mild form of stagnation of trade which may revive at any time . . ." But trade did pick up and over sixty carloads of coal were shipped from the mine daily. By 1891 the population of Blossburg was eight hundred and twenty-five. The mines were then putting out eight hundred tons daily. A Catholic church was

built, a hall annexed, and entertainment given to defray the costs. The church was known as Sacred Heart parish, Padre T. P. O'Keefe singing a High Mass every first Sunday of the month; the other Sunday he read a Low Mass but had Vespers and Benediction in the evening. The Methodist church also had socials as well as Sunday School for its members, Rev. Harewood lamenting the fact that a bell was lacking to call members for attendance. "Brother J. W. Sinnock," he wrote, "a veteran in the Territory, has had Blossburg throughout the year. His work, visiting from house to house, the homes of the hard-working coal miners, praying with and comforting the sick, burying the dead, and holding weekly service in their humble place of worship, can only be known in its magnitude when all things shall be revealed. Blossburg has the largest Sunday School in the Mission. In addition to regular pastoral duties, Brother Sinnock has the weekly task of teaching a large Bible class every Sabbath afternoon."

J. W. Thomas served as postmaster of Blossburg for a time and was succeeded by Judge C. F. Peterson, who was also Justice of the Peace. A fire at the mine caused a scarcity of coke at all the smelting plants in Arizona as well as New Mexico. Rev. Wm. John succeeded Rev. Sinnock at the Methodist church. Lizzie McIntire was the school teacher. Professor Owens of Pennsylvania had been teaching in Blossburg since 1886. The Raton Coal Company store was destroyed by fire on September 16, 1897, the loss amounting to twenty-five thousand dollars. Another school teacher, a Mrs. N. Conn, was employed to assist Lizzie McIntire. W. J. Cowan went to Holland's saloon and began to live it up, much to the annoyance of John Holland and some of his customers. Cowan threatened Holland. A gunfight ensued in which Cowan was killed. Holland was acquitted on a plea of self defense. John Jones, who fatally stabbed George Wagstaff in a drunken affray at McArthur's saloon, did not fare as well. Rev. Sinnock, who had been born in England in 1833, was well liked during his stay at Blossburg. "There will be a rousing anti-Grant meeting this evening (October 24, 1884) at the school house in Bloss-

burg. The Honorable O. P. McMains will address the meeting. The Gate City Band (Raton) will be in attendance." On March 1, 1894 an explosion occurred at the Blossburg mine which took the lives of Albert Snyder (age: 32); Joseph Fothingill (age: 26); Ed Hogan (age: 21); Richard Thornton (age: 40); and Samuel Wells (age: 13). Three others received serious injuries. Charles F. Preston was next named postmaster at Blossburg and he was succeeded by Evangeline Hollar. H. O. Schultz conducted a truck garden selling vegetables all over town. William Williams was killed in a mining accident at Blossburg three weeks after his brother was killed in the same mine doing the same type of work. "The Jolly Twelve" propose to give a ball and supper at the school house on Thanksgiving eve to raise funds for George Nepper who was crippled in the mines a year ago." The receipts amounted to \$168.50; expenses, \$101.25. Nepper, although legless, managed to attend the dance. He died the following year. Thomas and Alex Thompson came to town and bought Andrew Cencel's saloon. "The good change that has taken place in Blossburg since July of last year is something worth the notice of all citizens. Where at that time we had men of lawless disposition, we can now boast men of principle, men of honor, men who care for the welfare of their families and of the community in which they live . . . While we still have saloons in Blossburg our streets are not filled with a lot of drunken horsemen from Sunday morning to Monday morning, hooting and yelling like a set of madmen, as they were less than a year ago . . ." Four days later the editor of the RATON RANGE received another letter from Blossburg dated April 19, 1887: "Allow me a small space in your valuable columns. In your last issue I see a letter from the town of Blossburg, telling of the rapid progress and moral improvements for which I think we are very much indebted to the Blossburg preacher who came to this town in the month of December last, and has kept up a series of sacred services, and has been very successful in his labors. He has succeeded in organizing a fine Methodist society, something that has never before been accomplished in

Blossburg. The saloon keepers are very anxious for him to migrate to another part of the country. Those who were wont to congregate in the saloons on Sunday evening, singing their drunken songs, now mingle with the people of God on those evenings. I am proud of Rev. Jas. L. Smith. It is quite a novelty for me to find such an energetic man amongst us . . . " Last Saturday evening some ill disposed person heaped some wood saturated with coal oil at the door of the house where Peter Heck lives, and set it on fire, there being only one door and one very small window in the house. Peter had a very narrow escape. Such men should be driven from the country. The measles are dying out and the scarlet fever has made its appearance instead. There are seven or eight cases reported in town. The day school has closed for that reason."

Thomas & McClain Meat Market was a popular place in town. Ed Williams sold his saloon business to Charles McArthur and went up to British Columbia to look for work. William Smith moved from his ranch to the Pyner place. Pyner possible left due to a feud over his remarks on Sunday hunting. "Rev. Pyner seems to have his hands full over his sermon of last Sunday night. He made an attack on the pigeon shooters, dancers and good Templars, scoring severely. As several of the above parties contribute towards the support of the Reverend Gentleman, and not approving of his remarks, they have declared their intention of stopping their monthly payments. The young folks of Blossburg are a very nice and respectable lot of ladies and gentlemen and they feel a little sore over the treatment they have received of late." (Jan. 31, 1890). Rev. A. Pyner answered his critic by wondering why he did not use his name; why he didn't stick to the subject in hand; what did the Rev. Gentleman say to stir him up and make him so awfully mad? Pyner accused him of using faulty logic, of sticking to being a fisherman because he used nerve tonic. "He is so short-sighted," continued the aroused preacher, "that he cannot see even the length of his epistle, or else he would not have made one part to contradict the other. The fact is that my truthful tongue kills your Sabbath-breaking champion and others. If I make a living at my calling or

not is none of his business. Besides, I have done well for several years. If I wish to change my profession as he did a year ago, I am at liberty to do so. If he wishes to answer me let him use his own name."

By this time all of Blossburg took one side or another. Here was something to break the dull monotony of the coal town. The man who signed himself as the Observer answered the attack saying: "We are told that we are advancing in religious matters but I don't think Blossburg is advancing very fast when they have their church presided over by such a man as this. He is one of the great curiosities of the 19th Century."

Pyner answered this fresh attack. The Observer sat down and penned a long letter to the editor of the RATION RANGE, dated March 5, 1890: "I have read Rev. Pyner's long and oily-tongued letter of explanation, denials and craw-fishing statements which appeared in last week's issue. His first denial is that no one had the courage to call him to task about his sermons. Probably not, but if the resolutions passed by the Jolly Twelve which appeared in the same issue as my statement about Rev. Pyner's sermon, are not an expression of their thoughts and feelings I don't understand why they would make them public. Although not denouncing the gentleman personally, it was denouncing himself and others collectively. Besides, if I have it right, I think he has been called to task more than once over this matter and others, and as a matter of course took the craw-fish road and denied certain things which several parties say he uttered, but as he is a minister of the Gospel, I suppose he thinks his word, when weighed in the balance of truthfulness, weighs more than half a dozen others who are sinners in this mundane sphere. Everybody has a right to their own opinion but I will not take the Rev. Pyner's word any quicker than others who have said he did make certain assertions as I have previously quoted.

"He says he only referred to pigeon shooting on the Sabbath Day. Did I ever claim he said more? I said he made an attack on some pigeon shooters and he acknowledges it in his own language. As to dancers, he claims he used the

term dance as a general rule. It takes dancers to constitute a dance, but on that I will not dwell, as he further says he referred to dancers he had in his mind, dances in questionable places. If there are any questionable places or questionable characters in Blossburg I am unaware of it, but the Rev. Gentleman may have an eye to such and probably keeps better posted on such matters than your correspondent.

"In regard to the good Templars he takes the craw-fish route again. He claims to be a strict temperance man. That may be as far as I know, for I confess I never took a drink with the gentleman. Probably if he took a drink occasionally it would steady his nerves somewhat. I don't think that the Rev. Pyner would dispute the fact that part of the contributions have stopped. Last month's collections will fully corroborate my statement on that subject. I acknowledge that the world is large and that there are other places the gentleman might go if he can't live in Blossburg, but I question whether he can make a living at his so-called profession as minister of the Gospel. He further states that his desire is to make the young people of the place more respectable. If he expects to do it by abuse and by following his example of saying things in public and denying them in private, or craw-fishing in the press, I am afraid he will succeed very slowly.

"He lastly asks why I should act as critic if I was no critic? If the gentleman thinks that the people of Blossburg and your correspondent in particular, are going to be denounced, deprived of their freedom of speech, enjoyment, etc., and humbly bow to a would-be dictator, I will here inform the gentleman that the sooner he gets such ideas out of his head the better it will be and at the same time take quite a load off his mind. As I said before, I don't claim to be a religious critic but I can placidly inform Rev. Pyner that it don't take a religious critic to criticise some of the language and actions of himself. I acknowledge that I am not very well posted on religious matters but I have a few ideas and Mr. Pyner may find that they will go as far as some of his . . . "

The feud soon grew stale and Blossburg looked to other

excitement. Tom Johnson lost all his goods and house in a fire. All Blossburg showed up for the funeral of George Nepper who died on May 7, 1890. "The football game Sunday afternoon at Trinidad, Colorado, between the Blossburg and Starkville elevens was largely attended. A large delegation was present from both Blossburg and Starkville (Colorado) and cheer after cheer went up as their favorites made good plays. At the end of the game the score was two goals to one in favor of Blossburg. The game was for one hundred dollars, and sixty percent of the gate receipts. Considerable betting was done on the outside. It is understood that another game will be played in the near future for \$500." (July 25, 1890).

"Monday, May 7, 1889 — A meeting was held at the schoolhouse for the purpose of organizing a first and second baseball nine. Mr. C. McKillion was elected chairman; Ellis Jones, manager; Barney McGarvey, captain; Howard McClain, secretary and treasurer. Under existing circumstances it is rather difficult to raise the funds necessary for the organization but they mean to overcome all obstacles and with the efficient officers already elected they will prove a capital team."

Other announcements and news items found in the Raton paper (after the demise of the Blossburg sheet):

"The lumber, windows, moulding, etc., necessary to complete the new school house, has at last arrived, and is ready to be put into position. It is to be hoped that the work of finishing it will be pushed ahead as quickly as possible, as the snow has already appeared as a warning to the citizens to hurry to get the roof on. The way our children have been deprived of an education on account of having no school to go to is a detriment which our citizens should look to and remedy. The school building is large and commodious, and when finished will be as fine a building of its kind as there is in the Territory. Rev. G. W. Ray, our preacher, returned from Albuquerque last week. The Blossburg Co-operative Society met at the school house last Tuesday night. They have rented the building occupied by John Wiley's saloon and also the adjoining barber shop. They expect to begin business in the early part of

next week. The Sick & Accident Fund Association has not yet been permanently organized, but it will be in a short time. The foundation for the boiler house has been laid. There is a housing shortage in Blossburg. Blossburg needs street lights. Some of the men should get together and go after the mountain lions killing our colts." (Oct. 21, 1887).

"Saturday, October 1, 1887, we instituted the R. E. Cowan Lodge, No. 11, K of P, there being nineteen initial members and eleven card members. W. P. Dobbin, G. K. of R. S. of Santa Fe, being the instituting officer, ably assisted by Brothers Manchester and Mair, also of Santa Fe. Harmony No. 6 of Raton also rendered valuable assistance. At 12 P. M. the lodge adjourned to partake of a sumptuous repast in the new church building, by the ladies of Blossburg. One and all joined in praising the elegant fare, and all did full justice to the dainties. The Uniform Rank Boys especially were caught undoing their belts to prepare the way for the choice viands before them. After the supper they proceeded to the hall again and finished the work of the evening, after which the following officers were installed: Joseph Fatheringill, P. C.; J. F. Ruffner, C. C.; Edward Williams, V. C.; Peter Mochan, Pre.; Robert Wood, K. R. S.; William Belton, O. G. The installing officer was W. F. Dobbin. He presented the lodge with a very handsome Bible, for which the lodge returned their grateful thanks. The thanks of the lodge was tendered Harmony Lodge of Raton for the active part they took in the work. Thanks were also returned to the ladies of Blossburg for the elegant supper they so kindly provided. The organization of this brotherhood in Blossburg can only be of great benefit and satisfaction to that community, as it has for its motives the elevation and happiness of those connected therewith. It is especially true that a neighborhood like Blossburg needs the cementing influence of these brotherly organizations, and we feel that R. E. Cowan Lodge No. 11 has a good bright future before it, and a career for its members in the pathways of life that will be made smoother and more thickly lined with flowers through the beneficial influences which will go out from their new castle home . . . "

"Ground has been broken and work is well under way for the erection of a new co-operative store building. This is evidence that Blossburg's Co-Op is stationary and has come here to stay." (March 23, 1888).

"A grand ball was given in the new co-operative store building last Friday night, with the proceeds to go to our brass band . . . A herd of horses passed through here last week of which thirty head were sold to Blossburg parties. There are some dandies among them and the boys are having a picnic at their breaking. Professor D. L. Strine has struck the road to fortune. Step lightly, Professor, this is leap year, and if you don't make a success of it your name is Dennis . . . D. L. Strine and wife have commenced housekeeping . . . A. Cox contemplates starting a butcher shop first door south of the post office . . . (The shop opened Oct. 22, 1889). Blossburg consists mostly of new arrivals from the old country where they were led to believe that New Mexico was a land that flowed with milk and honey, and where a fortune could be made in a day, and at the first shadow they commence to 'draw their sticks' and seek other quarters. Some have already done this, and have been glad to return . . . The best coal has not been got as yet, and there is a sufficiency of it to last this generation out yet. The Company is steadily pushing its improvements though the whole of the U. S. is suffering from the same stagnation of trade, which must soon revive. So I think it reasonable to conclude that Blossburg has as fine a prospect for the future as any mining camp within a large circuit." (March 6, 1889).

"George Honeyfield has succeeded W. Reynolds as chairman of the Blossburg Friendly Co-Operative Society . . . Dr. Shuler has enlarged his office in Blossburg . . . Rev. W. W. Harvey, the Baptist minister at Raton, has the care of Blossburg Baptist congregation . . . Rev. G. W. Ray, the Methodist minister at Raton, has the care of the Methodist congregation at Blossburg . . . Dr. W. D. Pember-ton, dentist at Raton, shares Dr. Shuler's office at Blossburg . . . The Knights of Pythias held a grand ball in the new school house for the benefit of the school. The Blossburg Brass Band furnished music for the occasion . . . The

new school opened with Professor D. L. Strine as principal, Lizzie A. Floyd as assistant. Night school will be conducted for those who work in the mines during the day. There are one hundred and fifty children in the Blossburg school with one hundred still remaining to be registered . . . The Lodge of Good Templars, also known as the Temperance League, has been organized in Blossburg, thirty-four men and women having signed pledges. Rev. Wm. Reynolds is the leader of the Blossburg Choir . . . (Dec. 2, 1887).

"The Work & Win Lodge of the I. O. G. T. gave their monthly entertainment at the K. of P. Hall in Blossburg last Saturday night, H. L. Davis, C. T., in the chair. The program was a good and lengthy one, and the program proved one of the most enjoyable that has been given by the lodge. The chief feature of the evening was the admirable rendering of citations by children ranging from five to fourteen years of age. The courage of the Raton citizens and the different members of the various orders stationed therein which has been repeatedly acknowledged by local and other press, is fully equalled by Blossburgians, and more especially by the R. E. Cowan Lodge of the K. of P. Bro. J. L. Smith addressed the audience in a very able manner, his subject being Pythianism. George Nepper, who lost two legs about a year ago in the Blossburg mines, was in the affair. After the meeting a dance was held till morning." (Feb. 22, 1889).

"Evidently busy times cannot be far off, as the Raton C of C Co. is steadily pushing improvements. A bridge is to be constructed to connect the track leading from the Castle Garden Mine with that of the new mine to facilitate the discharging of coal. During the building of the bridge the majority of the miners will be employed in the new mines . . . George Cann married Jessie Axford . . . John Sharp married M. Stancy . . ." (March 1, 1889).

"The quarter-mile speed contest which took place at Blossburg last Saturday between Betton's gray mare and Amos Jones' bay, the rival belles of the town, was one of rare interest and was witnessed by over a thousand people. So closely were the game little racers matched that the

first dash resulted in a dead heat, and, after an hour's scoring in which the little gray showed her prejudice against trying conclusions, the second dash was won by the latter by a neck. Considerable cash changed hands as a result." (Aug. 29, 1890).

When school opened in the fall of 1890, Blackford was the principal and Mrs. B. F. McGarvey the assistant principal. Life went on as usual until the year of the Big Strike. The RATON RANGE for July 5, 1894, carried this story:

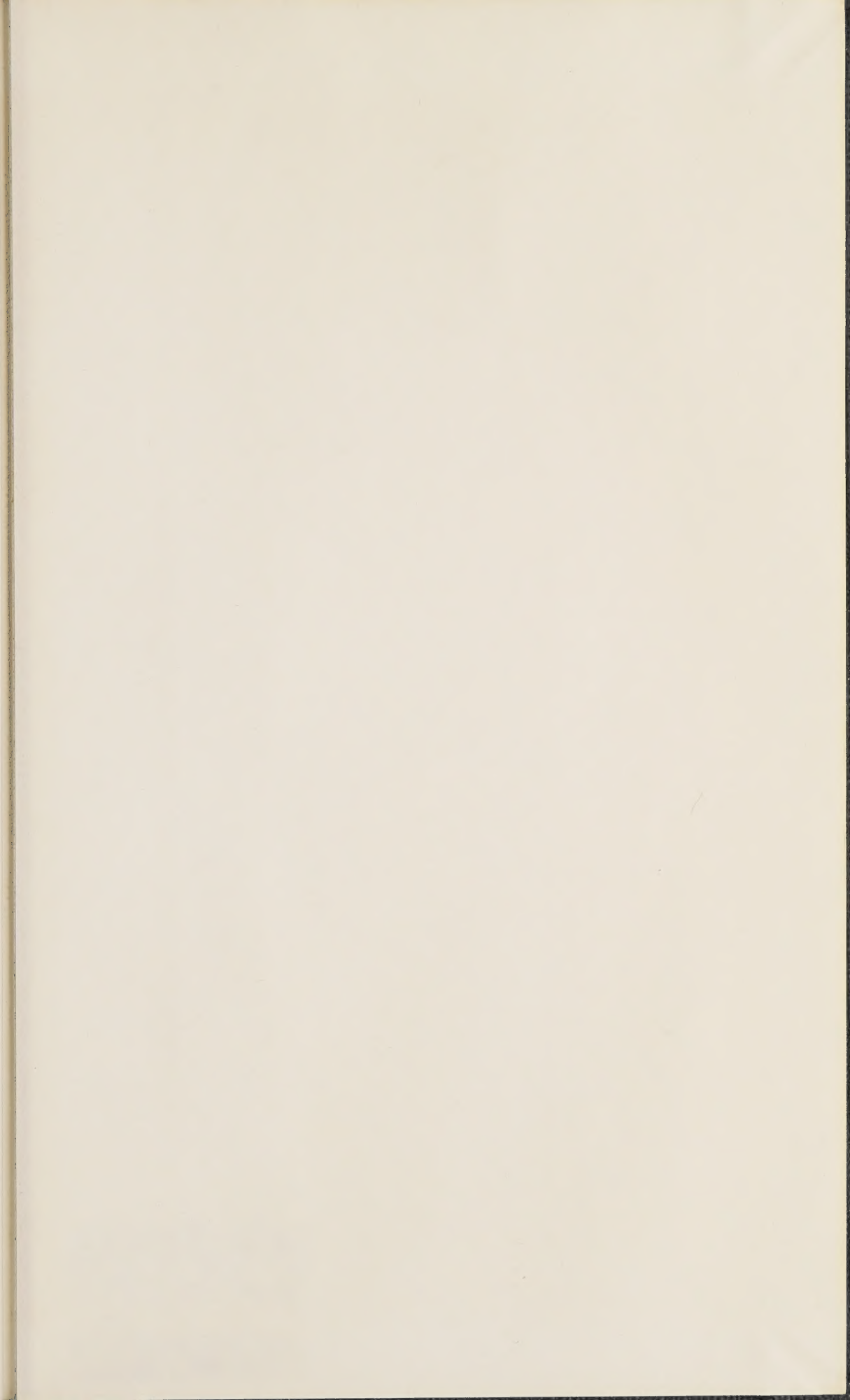
"No passenger train has come in or out of Raton since a week ago yesterday morning. The A. R. U. headquarters are at the Raton Rink. The situation at Raton so far as the trains are concerned, remains unchanged. The two trains stopped here Tuesday morning and Wednesday morning remain in the yard. Saturday afternoon the A. R. U. and the United Mine Workers of Blossburg formed a procession of about 600, escorted by the Blossburg and Raton bands, paraded the streets and after returning to the rink were creditably entertained by speakers, recitations and music. Mr. H. F. Smith, an operator, was summarily forced to leave town Thursday afternoon because he remained at work. The American Railway Union publicly announced that the organization had nothing to do with the matter; none of its members were engaged in it.

"Eighty-three U. S. deputy marshals were brought here from the southern part of the Territory Monday. They came by train to Dillon Junction and marched in from there. The general feeling among the citizens of Raton (and Blossburg) is that there was no occasion for the summoning of these deputies. Everything was quiet and orderly. The members of the A. R. U. had scrupulously obeyed the orders of the court in keeping away from the railroad company's property and there was no indication or suggestion that they would do otherwise. The deputy marshals were quartered at the depot hotel. When the cook and waiters refused to serve the officers they took care of the matter themselves. Conductor Medill was arrested Monday while at the hotel, for trespass. Four companies of U. S. troops arrived from Trinidad. They were sent from Denver. The Declaration of Independence was

read in the Rink yesterday morning by F. M. Walters. Col. E. P. Pearson, of the 10th U. S. Infantry, arrived last evening at 7 P. M. with two companies of his regiment and two hundred men. He came by explicit orders of President Cleveland, and says that his orders are most explicit and far reaching. When the troops arrived they searched the Rink for arms but found none.

"Last night and the night before coal cars were cut loose on the Blossburg branch and let run down into cars on the main line at Dillon, doing considerable damage. A portion of the track this side of the tunnel has been soaped . . ."

All during the strike mail failed to reach Blossburg and several men were arrested, taken to Santa Fe and held on \$1,000 bond for obstructing the U. S. mail. The strike was soon settled and the miners, railroad men, other construction workers went back to work. But Blossburg was never the same after that. New strikes in coal were made a few miles to the north and the town of Brilliant located. With mines opening up at Dawson, Segundo, Tercio, Morley, Van Houten, Koehler, Gardiner and other spots in the area Blossburg became less of a "Pittsburgh of New Mexico" than anyone can imagine. By 1903 the population dwindled to 100. W. J. Baker was the dentist; Pudraw Bertoline was live stock dealer; Mrs. L. Brunelli ran a boarding house; Rev. Cooney had services in the Sacred Heart church; E. Haller was the postmaster; Rev. C. D. Kennedy took care of the Methodists; G. B. Janolini had a saloon; Mrs. H. H. Norman ran a boarding house; Mrs. John Peden took care of another boarding house; Dr. Ros-enberry was the physician; W. H. Smith was a live stock dealer; Jonathan Vickers was the village blacksmith, and the Blossburg Mercantile Store took care of the town's grocery needs. But even all these had to give up as the place was abandoned and weeds took over. Blossburg joined Catskill, Otero, Colfax and others in the ever growing list of ghost towns in Colfax county. The end was painless simply because the miners were fortunate enough to find the same type of work awaiting them at Brilliant and Van Houten. The days of these latter were also numbered.







MAY 75



N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA

